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For Immediate Release  
February 17, 2013

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## **Navajo President Shelly Says New Justice Center Creates New Era for Navajo Safety**

**TUBA CITY, Ariz.** – Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly said the opening of the Western Diné Justice Center was the beginning of a new era for Navajo Public Safety Friday morning.

The opening ceremony for the justice center took place Friday near the chapter house.

“Today is a great day for the Navajo Nation. We are beginning a new era of public safety on the Navajo Nation,” President Shelly said before a crowd of more than 500 people in attendance.

The \$62 million Western Diné Justice Center is a 134,429 square foot facility that will house Navajo district courts, peacemakers courts, law enforcement, prosecutors and a corrections facility. The facility cost \$62 million to build.

The American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009 made about \$74 million available to the Navajo Nation for justice center construction and plans call for 13 more centers to be constructed on the Navajo Nation.

The justice center in Crownpoint, N.M. is expected to be dedicated in March, Kayenta is expecting a center to be completed early 2014 and Chinle plans to begin construction of a justice center next month.

“Today we are taking a huge step for our future because along with the judicial part of this complex, we have an area for our young Navajo people who need extra guidance,” President Shelly said.

The center will have 132 beds available to house a teen and adult correctional facility. In addition, the corrections rehabilitation program will incorporate Navajo culture.

“The correctional facility will house both adults and young people. Both will make use of traditional counseling and other healing practices, which makes sense for our people.

The Holy People gave us this way of life and for far too long, we have been trying to help our people in need of criminal rehabilitation without recognizing their Navajo traditional values,” President Shelly said.

Earlier in the morning, Vice President Rex Lee Jim blessed the new center Friday morning.

Before the center was funded, in 2009 when President Shelly was vice president, he said he worked for a week to create a Navajo based stimulus plan when ARRA funding was being outlined. That plan brought about \$550 million in funding to the Navajo Nation.

President Shelly also thanked the Navajo Council Budget and Finance Committee for securing about \$60 million in funding through a Key Bank loan.

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